



Learning Services

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PENCIL PRESSURE

Using an appropriate amount of pressure on the pencil is a reflection of accurate **PROPRIOCEPTION**. This is our brain's understanding of the feedback we get from our bodies, in particular where each body part is. How much force we use in any activity is dependent on this feedback. If our proprioception system is not processing the feedback accurately, we might use too much or too little force. You will see this in activities like closing/slamming a door, being "heavy handed" with items, hugging too strongly, spilling things often, holding utensils or pencils too lightly, and pressing too hard or too lightly with a pencil on paper.

WHAT TO DO:

Lots of **whole body input** will help – movement, heavy work and deep pressure. This will "turn on" the proprioceptive system to provide greater feedback to the brain so there's a better chance it will be interpreted correctly. So, before doing a pencil activity, do a whole body activity to prime the muscles and the proprioceptive system: jumping jacks, log-rolling, animal walks, wall presses. Also get **heavy work into the hands** to directly "turn on" the connection between hand muscles and the brain: squish modelling clay, play dough or Theraputty; squeeze a squishy ball, rub hands on thighs and count to 5.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES TO TRY:

- Use a variety of media that give different amounts of feedback:
 - Chalk gives a lot of feedback – on a chalkboard or the driveway
 - Finger paint – use fingers, Q-tips, packing foam pieces, chopped up bits of sponge
 - Magna Doodle
 - Scratch art kits – you use a wooden stick to scratch off the black layer revealing colours underneath. (from the Dollar store)

- Markers, crayons, pencils. Try a mechanical pencil, or a weighted pencil for varying types of feedback to the muscles and joints.
- Flatten out a piece of play dough and then use a sharp pencil to draw a picture in the dough. This gives a lot of feedback. This is actually a great way for kids to practice shapes, letters and numbers as they get so much feedback. Then when they draw the same form on a piece of paper, the muscle memory is stronger.
- Try putting other materials underneath the paper: bubble wrap, sandpaper, a piece of carpet (or just work on tummy on a rug). You will have to adjust the pressure you use for the drawing/colouring to work so this helps increase awareness of the amount of pressure.
- Create art by rubbing crayon on paper, with items under the paper: “fashion plates”, leaves, bark, corrugated cardboard, other textured surfaces.